

# **PROJECT UPDATE: I-90 SNOQUALMIE PASS EAST PROJECT**

## **BRIEFING PAPER**

Prepared for the  
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### **PURPOSE:**

This is an informational presentation on the Interstate 90 expansion project just east of Snoqualmie Pass.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Interstate 90 is the major east/west corridor in Washington State and a critical link between the Puget Sound area, eastern Washington, and points beyond. Several needs have been identified on the eastern approach to the pass including deteriorating pavement, sharp curves and vulnerability to closures from avalanches and rockslides. These problems must be addressed to increase safety, ensure the efficient movement of people and freight, and assure that the highway meets the future needs of the state's economy.

The project location is a focal point for environmental issues, operational problems, and a new federal management plan for the surrounding National Forest. WSDOT, with input from the public, state and federal agencies, interest groups and other stakeholders, has developed solutions that will address the transportation problems.

### **DISCUSSION:**

This project will expand I-90 from 4 to 6 lanes and upgrade the existing geometrics. Benefits of the project include:

- Avalanche closures will be eliminated by use of a tunnel or by a bridge over the avalanche chutes.
- Deteriorated pavement will be replaced by new concrete designed to last at least 40 years.
- Using fewer and straighter curves, increasing sight distance, and stabilizing slopes will improve safety.

This project will benefit travelers, shippers, businesses, and industry. Recreational users will have improved access to the region. Environmental mitigation will enhance wildlife corridors and visual quality. A new Safety Rest Area will improve traveler services.

Numerous meetings have been held with the general public, the local community, conservation groups, clubs, and other organizations to identify and resolve issues early on. Supporters, partners, or active participants in the project include:

- US Forest Service
- Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust
- Hyak Community
- WA State Parks
- Sierra Club
- WA State Fish & Wildlife
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB)

WSDOT has increased emphasis on this project by creation of a Project Engineer Office, working towards incorporation of new design-build concepts for a portion of the project, and developing a diverse level of support for the project.

Currently the project is 20% through the design process. Depending upon available funding, ground breaking could occur as early as the spring of 2004.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Not applicable

For further information, contact Todd Trepanier, Assistant Regional Administrator for Planning and Program Management, at 509-577-1626.